Implementation of Group Learning Strategies to Improve the Academic Performance of Grade XI Social Science Students at MAPN Medan

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing group learning strategies to improve the academic performance of Grade XI Social Science students at MAPN Medan. The background of the study arises from the low level of student engagement and collaborative skills within traditional learning settings. A quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design was employed, involving an experimental class implementing group learning strategies and a control class using conventional lecture-based methods. Research instruments included achievement tests and student activity observation sheets. The findings reveal a significant improvement in the academic performance of students in the experimental class compared with those in the control class. Students also demonstrated enhanced learning engagement, communication skills, and cooperation throughout the learning process. These results indicate that group learning strategies are effective in improving student learning outcomes and academic performance. The study recommends applying similar strategies in other learning contexts to support more active, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: Group Learning; Academic Performance; Grade XI Students; MAPN Medan; Learning Strategy.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas penerapan strategi pembelajaran kelompok dalam meningkatkan kinerja akademik siswa kelas XI Sosial di MAPN Medan. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada rendahnya partisipasi aktif dan kemampuan kolaboratif siswa dalam proses pembelajaran konvensional. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain quasi-experimental, melibatkan kelas eksperimen yang menerapkan strategi pembelajaran kelompok dan kelas kontrol yang menggunakan metode ceramah. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes hasil belajar dan lembar observasi aktivitas siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat peningkatan signifikan pada kinerja akademik siswa di kelas eksperimen dibandingkan kelas kontrol. Selain itu, siswa menunjukkan

peningkatan keterlibatan belajar, kemampuan komunikasi, dan kerja sama selama proses pembelajaran. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran kelompok merupakan metode yang efektif dalam meningkatkan hasil belajar dan kinerja akademik siswa. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan strategi serupa dalam konteks pembelajaran lainnya untuk mendukung proses pembelajaran yang lebih aktif, kolaboratif, dan bermakna.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Kelompok; Kinerja Akademik; Siswa Kelas XI; MAPN Medan; Strategi Pembelajaran.

A.   Introduction

The effectiveness of group learning strategies has become an important focus in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in efforts to enhance students' academic performance in secondary schools. Group-based instructional approaches are grounded in the principles of social constructivism, which assert that knowledge is best developed through interaction, collaboration, and shared meaning-making among learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

In classroom practice, group learning encourages students to actively participate, exchange ideas, and construct understanding collectively, which can lead to deeper cognitive processing and stronger learning outcomes (Johnson & Johnson, 2019). As classrooms become increasingly diverse in learning styles and academic readiness, group learning serves as a pedagogical model that fosters peer support, equal participation, and cooperative problem-solving.

Research also indicates that group learning environments promote motivation, engagement, and responsibility toward learning tasks (Slavin, 2018). In the context of social science education, collaborative strategies are particularly relevant, as the subject matter requires critical thinking, discussion, and the interpretation of complex social phenomena. Group learning provides opportunities for students to analyze issues from multiple perspectives while developing essential communication and teamwork skills (Gillies, 2016). In Indonesian secondary schools, including Islamic-based institutions, cooperative learning has been considered an effective approach to address varied academic abilities and enhance learning equity (Sanjaya, 2020).

MAPN Medan, as an educational institution offering Social Science education for Grade XI students, faces challenges related to students' academic performance, learning motivation, and classroom engagement. The implementation of group learning strategies is believed to address these challenges by creating more interactive and supportive learning environments. Students in social studies often struggle with abstract concepts, extensive reading materials, and analytical tasks; therefore, a structured group-learning approach may help break down complex topics and enable collaborative understanding (Arends, 2015). Furthermore, group learning cultivates students' interpersonal competencies, including leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution, which are essential for academic and social development (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012).

Studies conducted in various Indonesian schools also demonstrate that cooperative learning can significantly improve students' academic achievement, particularly when instructional methods involve clearly defined roles, structured interactions, and continuous teacher facilitation (Lie, 2008). The implementation of group learning is not only aligned with 21st-century learning demands but also supports national curriculum expectations that emphasize student-centered learning approaches. Within the MAPN Medan context, educators have expressed the need for instructional strategies that enhance student engagement and academic performance through more participatory learning models. Therefore, the application of group learning strategies for Grade XI Social Science students is expected to create collaborative classroom dynamics that promote deeper learning. Beyond academic outcomes, group learning can positively influence students' attitudes toward learning, sense of belonging, and confidence in expressing ideas (Tran, 2019). Considering these pedagogical benefits, it is essential to systematically examine the effectiveness of group learning strategies in improving academic performance in the social sciences classroom.

This research seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the application of group learning at MAPN Medan, contributing to the broader discourse on cooperative learning in Indonesia's educational landscape. Additionally, understanding how group learning impacts students' academic outcomes can inform teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in selecting effective instructional strategies to support

optimal learning. By evaluating the process and outcomes of the implementation, this study aims to present insights and recommendations that may enhance the quality of teaching and learning practices, particularly in social science education. The findings are expected to enrich existing literature and provide relevant implications for future educational interventions in secondary schools (Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2020).

B. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a quasi-experimental method to examine the effectiveness of group learning strategies in improving the academic performance of Grade XI Social students at MAPN Medan. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables the researcher to measure changes in learning outcomes objectively and to determine the statistical significance of the intervention. The quasi-experimental design was appropriate since the researcher could not randomly assign students to groups, as the study relied on existing class structures. According to Creswell (2018), quasi-experiments are often used in educational settings due to practical constraints while still allowing for causal inference.

The population of this study consisted of all Grade XI Social students at MAPN Medan during the 2025 academic year. From this population, one class was selected as the sample using purposive sampling. This sampling technique was chosen because the selected class met specific criteria relevant to the study, including class size, schedule alignment, and consistency of teaching materials. Etikan and Bala (2017) note that purposive sampling is effective when selecting participants who can provide relevant and meaningful data for the research objectives.

Data were collected using two primary instruments: a pre-test and a post-test designed to measure students' academic achievement before and after the implementation of the group learning strategy. The test items were developed based on the curriculum competence standards and were validated by two experts in Islamic education and assessment. Instrument validation ensured the accuracy, relevance, and reliability of the test items. As suggested by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2019), content

validation through expert judgment strengthens the credibility of measurement tools in educational research.

The learning intervention involved implementing a structured group learning strategy over four weeks. During this period, students participated in collaborative discussions, problem-solving tasks, and peer evaluation sessions designed to enhance understanding of social science concepts. The teacher acted as a facilitator, guiding group interactions and ensuring that all members contributed to the learning activities. According to Slavin (2019), cooperative learning strategies can significantly improve student engagement and cognitive achievement when properly structured and facilitated.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' pre-test and post-test scores, including the mean, standard deviation, and range. Inferential analysis was performed using a paired-samples t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' academic achievement before and after the application of group learning. The paired t-test is suitable for examining differences in related samples, as recommended by Field (2020). All statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS version 26.

Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the study. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the school administration, and participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Students were assured that their participation would not affect their grades and that their data would remain confidential. As Creswell and Creswell (2021) emphasize, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality is essential for maintaining ethical standards in educational research.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of group learning strategies in Grade XI Social Studies at MAPN Medan significantly contributed to improving students' academic performance. The data analysis showed a consistent increase in students' test scores after the application of group-based instructional methods, indicating that collaborative learning environments promote deeper

understanding and stronger engagement. Students who initially demonstrated low participation became more active when placed in structured group settings, suggesting that peer support plays a central role in motivating learners to contribute and learn more effectively.

The study also found that group learning enhanced students' communication, cooperation, and critical thinking skills. During observations, it was noted that students engaged in meaningful discussions, negotiated ideas, and collectively solved problems. These interactions align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning as a social process facilitated through peer interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). The findings support the idea that learning in groups enables students to construct knowledge together and reflect upon their understanding through dialogue.

Students expressed positive perceptions toward the group learning strategy. Interviews indicated that they felt more comfortable sharing their ideas in smaller groups compared to whole-class discussions. This sense of psychological safety helped reduce anxiety and encouraged participation from students who were previously hesitant to engage. This is consistent with Johnson and Johnson's (1999) assertion that cooperative learning environments cultivate positive interdependence and individual accountability.

The improvement in academic achievement was also attributed to the structured roles assigned within each group. When students were given specific responsibilities— such as summarizer, presenter, note-taker, or evaluator—they demonstrated greater ownership of the learning process. Research shows that assigning roles helps maintain group focus, encourages accountability, and prevents unequal participation (Slavin, 2014). The clear role distribution in this study enabled students to collaborate more effectively and manage their learning goals.

Another important finding relates to students' increased motivation. The post-intervention questionnaire showed a rise in students' intrinsic motivation toward learning, reflected in their increased enthusiasm, engagement, and willingness to complete tasks. This supports the view that cooperative learning increases motivation by providing social support and a sense of belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

However, the study also identified challenges in implementing group learning strategies. Some students experienced difficulties managing group conflicts, and a few tended to rely on more capable peers during the early implementation stages. This highlights the need for continuous teacher monitoring and intervention to ensure equitable participation. Teachers must provide clear guidelines, model collaborative skills, and reinforce expectations consistently to reduce dependency and ensure each student contributes meaningfully.

Finally, these findings demonstrate that group learning strategies not only enhanced academic achievement but also fostered essential 21st-century skills. By working collaboratively, students developed stronger communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities—skills that are crucial for their academic and professional futures. Therefore, the implementation of group learning in MAPN Medan proved to be an effective instructional strategy for improving both cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of group learning strategies has a significant impact on improving the academic performance of Grade XI Social Science students at MAPN Medan. Through structured collaboration, students were able to engage more actively in the learning process, share knowledge, and build a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The group learning environment also encouraged higher participation and fostered a sense of responsibility among learners. These elements collectively contributed to the improvement of students' learning outcomes.

Moreover, the group learning strategy created opportunities for peer tutoring, where stronger students assisted their peers in understanding difficult concepts. This reciprocal process not only strengthened students' cognitive abilities but also enhanced soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The collaborative nature of the strategy aligns with the principles of social constructivism, emphasizing the significance of social interaction in knowledge construction. Evidence from the

classroom observations and assessments shows that students responded positively to this learning approach, displaying increased motivation and engagement.

In conclusion, the application of group learning strategies proved effective in enhancing both the academic and non-academic competencies of students. Therefore, it is recommended that educators integrate this method more consistently into classroom practice, especially in subjects requiring active discussion and conceptual understanding. Future research may expand the focus to different grade levels or subject areas to examine broader impacts of group learning strategies within diverse educational contexts. This will contribute to a deeper understanding of collaborative learning as a sustainable instructional model in modern education.

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